# SPAIN, BLOW BY BLOW

*Project for a sculptural series, installation and performance*

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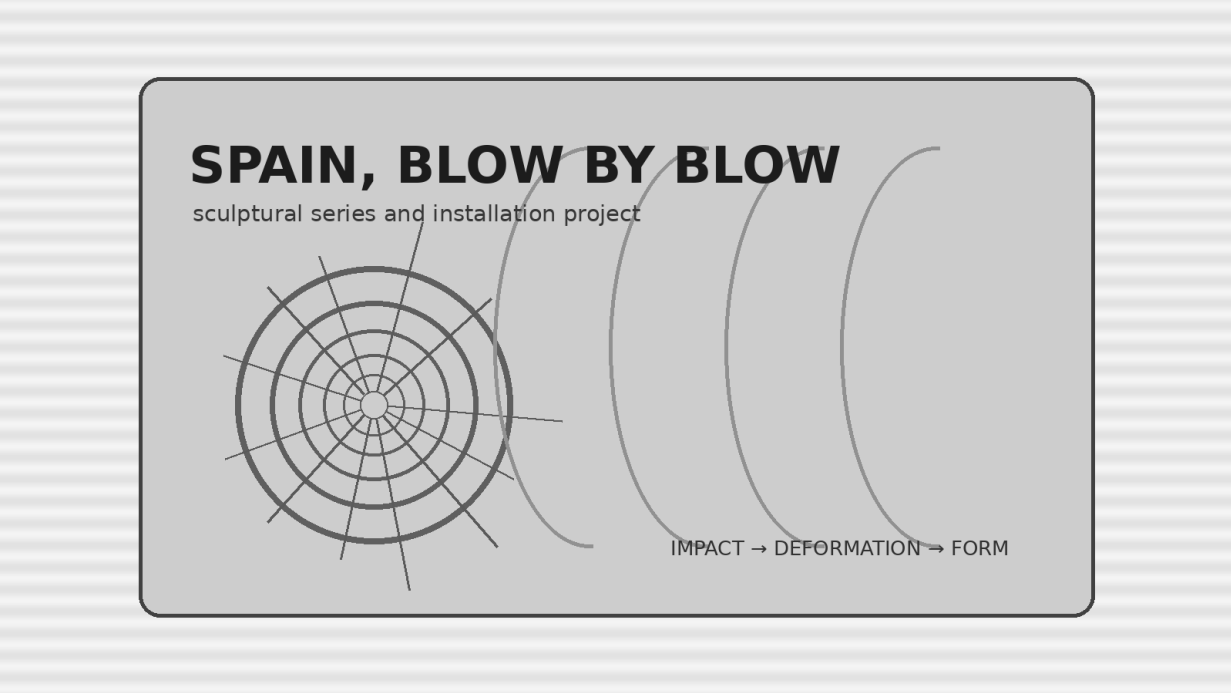


*“The blow does not represent the form: it produces it.”*

## 1. Central idea

The series begins from an artistic hypothesis: Spain can be understood as a political form that has historically been defined, reinforced and remade through episodes of coercion, punishment and violence exercised against Catalonia. The work does not seek simply to illustrate an aggressor and a victim. Its decisive operation is more material: the blow applied to Catalonia becomes the procedure that fabricates, deforms, sustains or recomposes the form of Spain.

Sculpture, therefore, does not begin with a Spain that is already given. Spain appears as a result. Each impact, pressure, perforation, load or compression leaves a local mark on Catalonia and, simultaneously, produces a formal consequence in the whole. The thesis is thus translated into a physical grammar: impact → deformation → form.

This structure allows the exhibition to function even if the viewer does not share the author's historical thesis: the work proposes a visible and debatable causal relationship. The argument is not written onto the sculpture; it is embedded in the way the sculpture has been made.

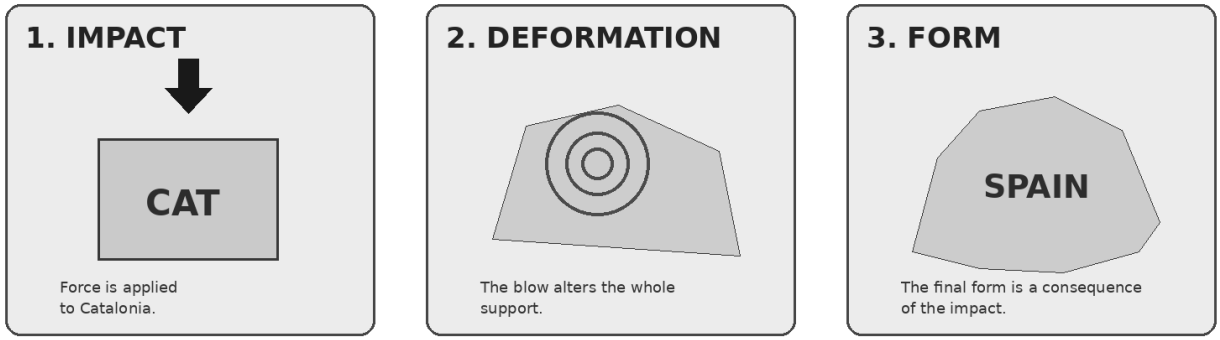


*Figure 1. Common material grammar of the series.*

## 2. Rule of the series

Every work should follow one condition: Catalonia does not appear merely as an image of suffering, and Spain does not appear merely as a figure of aggression. There must be a physical relationship between the two. The damage, pressure or impact applied at one point must participate in the fabrication, stability or transformation of the overall form.

**TO STRIKE CATALONIA IS TO GIVE SHAPE TO SPAIN.**

This rule prevents the project from being reduced to conventional political iconography. Its primary language is sculptural: force, mass, resistance, deformation, fatigue, fracture, material memory and repetition.

# 3. Proposed works

## 3.1. Spain, Blow by Blow

CENTRAL WORK

A large metal sheet begins almost flat. Catalonia is identified as the area where impacts are applied. The succession of hammer blows sinks, stretches and redistributes stresses across the support until a recognizable form of Spain emerges from the same material. Catalonia is dented, fissured or even perforated; the rest of the object gains volume precisely as a consequence of those blows.

**Material / device:** Mild steel, copper or thick aluminium; lower die; sledgehammer or pneumatic hammer during a documented production phase.

**Conceptual core:** Spain does not pre-exist the blow: it becomes visible through the blow.

## 3.2. 312 Blows

PERFORMANCE / RESIDUAL SCULPTURE

Between 1714 and 2026, 312 years elapse. Historical duration is converted into an exact physical quantity: 312 impacts on a piece of Catalonia integrated into a larger support. Each blow corresponds to one elapsed year. The final result is not restored: the exhibited work is the combination of the deformed plate, the tool used, the detached fragments and the audiovisual record of the action.

**Material / device:** Steel or copper plate, numbered sledgehammer, visible mechanical counter, fixed camera and contact microphone.

**Conceptual core:** Time ceases to be chronology and becomes an accumulation of force.

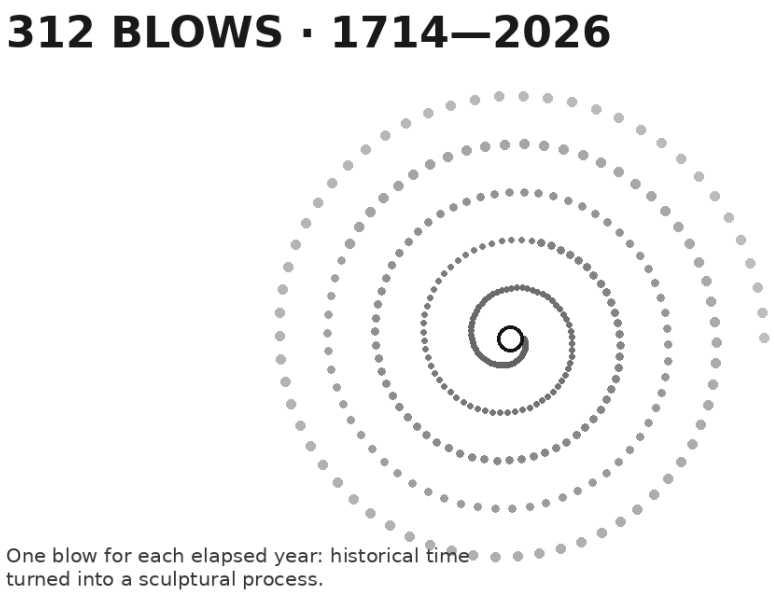


*Figure 2. Visual study of repetition for 312 blows.*

### 3.3. 1,014

HISTORICAL PLATE

A plate receives 1,014 impacts, a figure associated with the bombardment of Barcelona from Montjuïc on 3 December 1842. The work can register each blow as a distinct depression, numbered only on the reverse, leaving the public face almost mute. The title —1,014— functions both as data and as enigma.

**Material / device:** Copper or blued steel sheet; punches of different gauges; support die; possible raking light.

**Conceptual core:** A historical datum is transformed into material texture and density.

### 3.4. The Mould

NEGATIVE SCULPTURE

Here Catalonia functions as an extremely resistant steel mould. A softer mass is compressed onto it and, blow after blow, eventually acquires the form of Spain. The inversion matters: Catalonia appears not only as that upon which violence is exercised, but as the negative against which the political form defines itself.

**Material / device:** Steel mould, encapsulated lead or non-toxic alternative, wax, annealed aluminium, industrial clay or high-strength plaster.

**Conceptual core:** The identity of the whole is defined against that which it attempts to subdue.

### 3.5. The Machine for Making Spain

KINETIC INSTALLATION

An apparently absurd industrial machine repeats a cycle: it strikes a small form of Catalonia and, using the energy of the same movement, lifts, tensions or recomposes a larger structure in the shape of Spain. When the mechanism stops, the upper structure loses tension or slowly begins to come apart.

**Material / device:** Low-speed electromechanical piston, cams, steel cable, counterweights, articulated structure and safety sensor.

**Conceptual core:** Not only historical formation, but the periodic reproduction of antagonism as a mechanism of cohesion.

### 3.6. Spain Weighs

PRESSURE SCULPTURE

A mass in the shape of Spain is suspended or supported so that a decisive proportion of its weight rests on a single point corresponding to Catalonia. Beneath it sits a fragile element —ceramic, plaster, laminated glass or fissurable stone— that gradually cracks during the exhibition. There is no explosion or spectacular gesture: only pressure, time and creaking.

**Material / device:** Certified load-bearing structure, steel or concrete mass, replaceable sacrificial piece and sound capture.

**Conceptual core:** Violence ceases to be an event and becomes a permanent structural load.

### 3.7. Geology of the State

STRATIGRAPHIC SERIES

A vertical section composed of strata of different materials records separate historical episodes. Each layer receives a type of impact suited to its temporality: artillery suggested through perforations, administrative pressure through compression, police violence through dry blows. The point is not to declare all episodes identical, but to show a hypothetical continuity through historical discontinuities.

**Material / device:** Layers of plaster, metal, charred wood, ceramic and pressed paper; dates engraved on the side.

**Conceptual core:** Structural continuity without erasing differences between actors, regimes and contexts.

### 3.8. Archive of Dents

MODULAR SERIES

Dozens of small metal plates, all in the same format, display a single deformation each. There is no text on the front; a date, place or archival reference appears on the edge or reverse. Their accumulation produces an archive that can grow through research and new works.

**Material / device:** 20 × 20 cm or 30 × 30 cm plates, copper/brass/steel, archival shelving or grid wall installation.

**Conceptual core:** History is preserved as the material's physical memory, not only as written narrative.

## 4. Exhibition architecture

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The exhibition can be organized as a progression from the singular event to the system. The entrance presents 312 Blows, where the visitor immediately grasps the equivalence between time and impact. Next, 1,014 introduces a quantified, concrete episode. The centre of the room is occupied by The Machine for Making Spain, which turns the historical hypothesis into a present, repetitive mechanism. The route ends with Spain Weighs and The Mould, slower and less narrative works in which violence becomes structure and dependency.

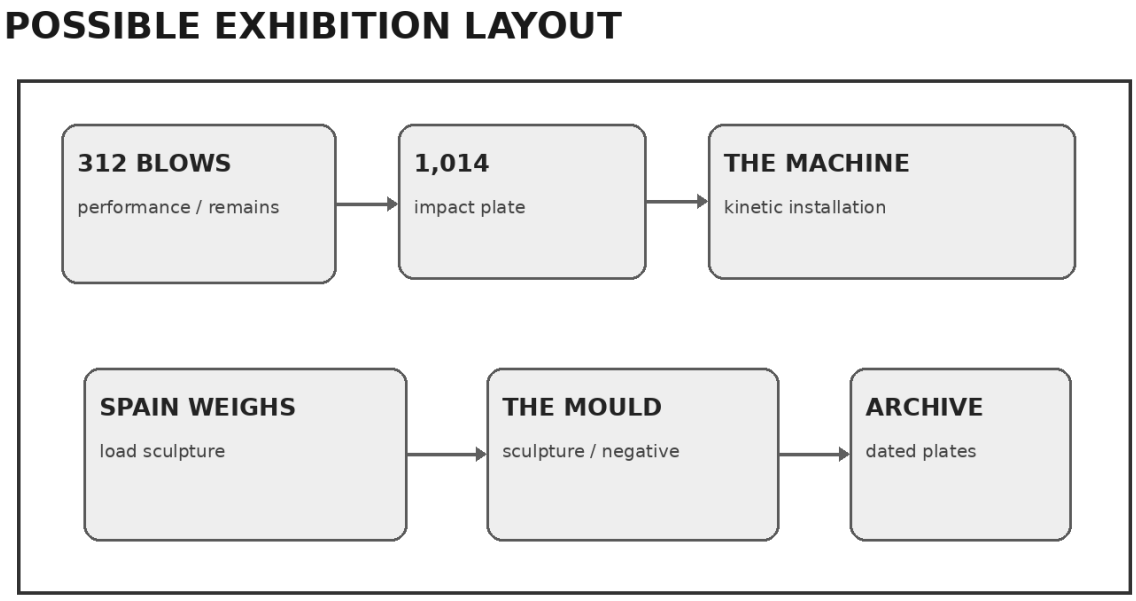


*Figure 3. Diagram of a possible spatial arrangement; not a construction plan.*

Sound can act as a connecting thread: isolated blows, low vibrations, structural creaks and long silences. An epic soundtrack should be avoided. The materiality itself should generate the exhibition's tension.

## 5. Historical precision and artistic force

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The work can advance a strong hypothesis of historical continuity without asserting that all episodes are equivalent or that a single political subject has remained immutable for three centuries. That precision strengthens the project. 1714 belongs to the War of the Spanish Succession and the establishment of Bourbon rule; the 1842 bombardment was ordered by the government of Espartero's regency; the bombings of 1937-1939 decisively involved Italian aviation —and, in the wider conflict, German aviation as well— in the service of the Francoist side; and the police violence of 2017 belongs to a completely different political and legal regime.

The continuity proposed by the series need not erase these differences. It can be formulated as an artistic question: to what extent does a political community define itself through the repetition of a conflict with one of its constituent parts? The work does not prove the thesis as a historiographical study would; it submits it to a form, a weight and a procedure.

## 6. Minimum historical references for production

| Date | Reference | Artistic use |
|---|---|---|
| 1714 | Siege and fall of Barcelona during the War of the Spanish Succession; subsequent Bourbon reordering and the Nueva Planta decrees. | Possible chronological starting point for the series. |
| 1842 | Bombardment of Barcelona from Montjuïc during Espartero's regency. Summary sources cite 1,014 projectiles and 462 buildings damaged or destroyed. | Factual basis for the work 1,014. |
| 1938 | Aerial bombings of Barcelona. The aerial image from 17 March preserved on Wikimedia Commons documents an attack by Italian aviation. Memòria BCN gives a death toll of 875 for the attacks of 16-18 March. | Visual archive and counterpoint between discrete impact and aerial destruction. |
| 2017 | Intervention by Spain's National Police and Civil Guard during the 1 October referendum. | Possible material translation through a blunt strike, baton blow or compression, while avoiding any technical equivalence with bombardment. |

Recommended visual sources for the production dossier: "Vista de Barcelona bombardeada en 1842," engraving by D. Estruch, Biblioteca Nacional de España, reproduced on Wikimedia Commons (public domain); and "Barcelona bombing (1938).jpg," aerial photograph of 17 March 1938 attributed to Italian aviation and hosted on Wikimedia Commons. For the 1938 context, the Memòria Barcelona archive on bombing memory sites may also be used.

## 7. Materials and language

**Metal.** Steel, copper and aluminium retain the trace of impact and allow work with denting, fatigue, oxidation and tension.

**Ceramic / plaster.** They introduce fragility, breakage and dust. They are suitable for works in which the damage should be irreversible and visible.

**Sound.** The blows can be amplified with contact microphones. The sound should come from the real action, not from musical illustration.

**Video.** Production should be recorded with a fixed camera, without excessively dramatic editing. The procedure is part of the work.

**Remains.** Fragments, shavings, dust and tools are not waste: they constitute the material archive of the process.

**Scale.** Alternating one or two monumental works with smaller series will prevent the entire exhibition from depending on spectacle.

## 8. Possible titles

**Spain, Blow by Blow** — General title of the series; direct and material.

**The Form of the Blow** — More abstract and less immediately political.

**Spain: Sculpture by Percussion** — Emphasizes the procedure as a sculptural technique.

**Sculpting Spain** — Short international version.

**The Negative Mould** — Suitable for an exhibition focused on formal dependency.

**A Form of Impacts — More descriptive exhibition title.**

## 9. Short wall text

Spain, Blow by Blow begins with a simple sculptural operation: apply force to Catalonia and make that force produce the form of the whole. Striking, compressing, perforating and loading do not illustrate a thesis; they are the technique by which the work is made. The series proposes reading three centuries of conflict as a physical memory: a political form defined in part by that against which it exerts pressure. The historical episodes are not identical and their actors change. The question remains: can a collective form come to depend on the very antagonism that wounds it?

## 10. Tags

sculpture · political art · Catalonia · Spain · memory · violence · state formation · impact · deformation · material memory · performance · installation · historical memory · Barcelona · Montjuïc · 1714 · 1842 · 1938 · 2017

## 11. Reference sources


1. **Wikimedia Commons / BNE. Vista de Barcelona bombardeada en 1842, D. Estruch (public domain).**
2. **Wikimedia Commons. Barcelona bombing (1938).jpg, aerial photograph from 17 March 1938, Italian aviation.**
3. **Memòria Barcelona. Espais de memòria: Barcelona bombings and March 1938 data.**
4. **DBPedia and historiographical syntheses of the 1842 bombardment: 1,014 projectiles and 462 buildings damaged or destroyed.**